



RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908-5767

TDD 401-831-5508

June 19, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

I will begin by apologizing for the impersonal introduction to this letter, but I am writing about an issue that has broad implications for a very diverse universe of individuals and groups throughout Rhode Island. The issue is community involvement, communications, and the fair and consistent clean up of contaminated properties across the State. This greeting may be overused and seen as somewhat impersonal, but it is appropriate for this effort since we are truly reaching out to anyone and everyone who may be concerned about this topic.

Over the past few years, the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) has worked to develop and implement several measures to ensure consistent and fair consideration of community issues and concerns related to our environment in many programs and areas. In addressing such issues and concerns, the Department strives to ensure that no person or group suffers disproportionately from environmental degradation or is denied a fair share of the benefits of environmental restoration. This is the foundation of a draft policy on environmental equity developed and published by DEM.

Environmental equity is very important when sites are discovered that have been impacted by spills and releases of toxic materials. The Rhode Island Industrial Property Remediation and Reuse Act, which is one of the major laws governing the clean up of contaminated sites, requires DEM to consider the effects of clean ups on communities around the sites and specifically requires that DEM consider the issues of environmental equity for low income and racial minority populations when regulating these clean up actions.

While DEM has taken many steps to meet these goals and mandates, we need to continue to improve the process.

Toward that goal, the Department is convening a stakeholder workgroup to provide direction in the development of new or improved DEM policies, procedures, regulations, and, potentially, legislative initiatives to meet our legal and policy goals on environmental equity.

Our goal is to develop a stakeholder group representing a fair cross-section of parties having an interest in the investigation, remediation and redevelopment of contaminated sites in environmental equity areas, including but not limited to: tenants; landowners; community and environmental organizations; governmental representatives; elected officials; developers; representatives from the environmental consulting industries and others.

The issues to be addressed by the stakeholder group will include, at a minimum:

- A. Methods for insuring proper notice to abutting property owners and tenants;
- B. Processes and procedures for the public to petition DEM to assert jurisdiction over contaminated sites when DEM has information to suspect a possibility of release or contamination;

- C. Issues to consider and methods and standards to employ to ensure fair and consistent consideration of environmental equity issues when reviewing clean-up plans for contaminated sites;
- D. Development and implementation of a community involvement process during the investigation and remediation of contaminated sites; and
- E. Establishment of paper and/or electronic document repositories in impacted communities.

The stakeholder group will seek consensus on any proposals for legislation, regulations or policies. If the stakeholder group fails to reach consensus on any one or more proposal(s), then DEM will use its best professional judgment to develop regulations, policies or legislation proposals incorporating the comments and information generated during the stakeholder process.

We expect that many interested parties will be interested in participating in this group. To ensure a fair and equitable representation of all diverse perspectives and opinions and create a group that has the size and make-up to effectively and efficiently debate issues and come to decisions and recommendations, we will be limiting the size and perspectives of the membership on the workgroup. DEM is first seeking nominations or letters indicating interest in participating in the workgroup. A diverse workgroup will be developed from the nominations and letters of interest received.

We expect that the effort will involve monthly meetings over the next 8-12 months to discuss this topic. Potentially, subcommittees may be formed to explore specific issues in more detail.

If interested, please send a nomination or letter indicating an interest in participating **BY JULY 31, 2006** either in writing or via e-mail to:

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Assistant Director of Air, Waste and Compliance
RI Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade Street
Providence, RI 02908
eeworkgroup@dem.ri.gov

All meetings held as part of this effort will be open to the public and governed by the process outlined in the RI Open Meetings laws. A web site will be developed to support the workgroup and make all meeting notices, meeting agenda, minutes, and supporting documents available to the public.

I hope you are interested in participating in this important effort and will help the Department continue to improve our operations to make Rhode Island a clean and enjoyable place for all our residents. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Terrence Gray", with a stylized, flowing script.

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Assistant Director of Air, Waste and Compliance